

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 04779 071032Z

14

ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /070 W

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R 070801Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3388

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 4779

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG, PFOR, AINR, XX, TS

SUBJECT: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS: TUNISIA AND THE NON-ALIGNED
CONFERENCE ON INFORMATION

REF: TUNIS 2401

1. TUNISIAN DELEGATION TO NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE ON
INFORMATION TO BE HELD IN NEW DELHI FROM JULY 8 TO 13
DEPARTED TUNIS JULY 5. DELEGATION HEADED BY SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR INFORMATION MUSTAPHA MASMOUDI WITH TUNISIAN
AMBASSADOR IN BELGRADE TAIEB SAHBANI AND PRESIDENT-DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF TUNIS-AFRIQUE-PRESSE MAHMOUD TRIKI AS MEMBERS.
MASMOUDI IS A CABINET-LEVEL OFFICIAL WHO HAS BEEN IN CHARGE
OF INFORMATION POLICY SINCE SEPT 1974. HE HAS GAINED A
REPUTATION AS A DIM-WITTED, UNINSPIRED PURVEYOR OF STRAIGHT
PARTY LINE. SAHBANI HAS SERVED IN NUMEROUS DIPLOMATIC POSTS
FOR GOT DESPITE HIS ASSOCIATION WITH TUNISIAN POLITICAL CIRCLES
NOW IN OPPOSITION TO GOVERNMENT. HE IS LEADING TUNISIAN EXPERT
ON THIRD WORLD AFFAIRS AND ATTENDS MOST NAM CONFERENCES. HE IS
REPORTED TO BE FAVORABLY INCLINED TOWARD U.S., BUT WE HAVE HAD
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TUNIS 04779 071032Z

NO CONTACT WITH HIM FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND CANNOT GAUGE HIS

CURRENT OPINIONS. WE HAVE NO RECORD THAT HE SPEAKS ANY LANGUAGE OTHER THAN FRENCH AND ARABIC. MAHMOUD TRIKI IS A FAITHFUL APPARATCHIK IN TUNISIA'S SOLE POLITICAL PARTY AND HAS A PROMISING CAREER. HE HAS BEEN FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL IN CONTACT WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS, BUT HE IS CAREFUL NOT TO APPEAR OVERLY IDENTIFIED WITH US. HE SPEAKS ONLY FRENCH AND ARABIC.

2. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY OFFICER SHORTLY BEFORE DEPARTURE FOR NEW DELHI, TRIKI ANALYZED CURRENT PLAY IN NAM OVER INFORMATION POLICY AND GAVE US ESTIMATE OF WHAT WILL COME OF NEW DELHI CONFERENCE. HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT SOME COMMON INFORMATION POLICY CAN BE ESTABLISHED FOR NAM AND THAT NEW MECHANISMS FOR INFORMATION SHARING CAN BE ESTABLISHED. HE ADMITTED THAT PROPOSAL MADE AT TUNIS SYMPOSIUM OF NAM (SEE REFTEL) FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF SEVERAL PRESS POOLS ALONG LINES OF ONE NOW CURRENTLY FUNCTIONING IN BELGRADE IS PROBABLY DEAD. THE BELGRADE POOL WILL CONTINUE TO OPERATE, HE TOLD US, BUT WILL NOT BE DUPLICATED. HE EXPECTED, HOWEVER, THAT SOME POOLING ARRANGEMENT WILL BE DEVELOPED AT THE NEW DELHI CONFERENCE FOR SHARING TV PROGRAMS AND NEWSFILMS.

3. TRIKI NOTED THAT THE NAM IS LIMITED IN WHAT IT CAN ACHIEVE BY POWER RIVALRIES AND IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE GROUP. REGARDING IDEOLOGY, HE LAMENTED THAT COUNTRIES LIKE CUBA ARE DETERMINED TO GIVE THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT THEIR PARTICULAR REVOLUTIONARY COLORATION. WHAT THEY HAVE DONE, HE SAID, MAY BE FINE FOR CUBA BUT IT HAS LITTLE RELEVANCE TO THE PROBLEMS OF MOST COUNTRIES. HE ALSO LAMENTED THAT MODERATE STATES LIKE TUNISIA THAT OPPOSE SUCH RADICAL ATTEMPTS TO DOMINATE THE MOVEMENT ARE VICIOUSLY ATTACKED. THE MOVEMENT HAS COME TO ACCEPT THE RADICALS' INFLAMMATORY STATEMENTS IN CONFERENCE DECLARATIONS BUT HE VIEWED THEM AS HAVING LITTLE MORE IMPORTANCE THAN A COMPLIMENTARY CLOSING ON A BUSINESS LETTER.

4. REGARDING POWER RIVALRIES WITHIN THE NAM, TRIKE SAID THAT MEMBER STATES ATTEMPT TO USE THE MOVEMENT AS A VEHICLE FOR PRESTIGE. INDIA, HE SAID, IS SEEKING TO GRAB CONTROL OF INFORMATION POLICY TO RECOUP ITS LOSS OF STATUS IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TUNIS 04779 071032Z

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. HE ATTRIBUTED THIS LOSS OF STATUS TO LESS RESPECTED LEADERSHIP SINCE THE DEATH OF NEHRU, THE BAD PRESS IT HAS RECEIVED SINCE IMPOSITION OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, AND ITS LESS NON-ALIGNED STANCE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

5. TRIKI SAID THAT TUNISIA'S PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE IN THE NEW DELHI CONFERENCE WILL BE TO RETAIN ITS DESIGNATION AS

NAM COORDINATOR FOR INFORMATION POLICY. HE DID NOT
CITE ANY SUPPORT GOT WOULD HAVE FOR THIS OBJECTIVE, BUT
WAS CONFIDENT THAT HE COULD ACHIEVE IT. ASIDE FROM HOPE
THAT A TV AND NEWSFILM SHARING ARRANGEMENT WOULD BE DEvised
IN NEW DELHI, TRIKI COULD NOT CITE ANY OTHER CONCRETE
OBJECTIVE LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED BUT STATED THAT THE
RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO THE COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT
WOULD MAKE THAT MEETING THE "BANDUNG FOR INFORMATION POLICY"
OF THE NAM. MULCAHY

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